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October 10, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

We write to register the strong opposition of the nation's mayors to the new regulations on "public charge" that your Department is proposing. While we understand the intent of the "public charge" test that has been in place for decades, the new proposed rule takes this principle to an extreme and, if adopted, would ultimately punish immigrants for accessing non-cash benefits designed to help families succeed and thrive in the United States and become contributing members of our communities.

Many great Americans came to this country as immigrants, arriving with nothing and starting their journey from the bottom rung of the economic ladder. Our history has shown us that access to critical benefits are often necessary for a short time in order to help immigrants become assimilated and ultimately prosper in their new country. Clearly, it would not be in the best interest of our communities to impose further restrictions on non-cash benefits that would limit immigrants' growth, economic prosperity, and pursuit of happiness as Americans.

In our view, this proposal will compromise children's health, nutrition, and development; impact access to health care; reduce housing options; and negatively affect our local economies. It will force families to choose between the help they need and the people they love. Further, by disrupting many people's pathways to citizenship, the proposed rule would also deprive immigrants and cities alike of the well-documented benefits of naturalization on earnings, employment, and homeownership.

Furthermore, an attempt to enact this new regulation that significantly expands the definition of "public charge" via a federal rule is wrong and prevents a more appropriate study of this issue with proper Congressional involvement.

As mayors, we see firsthand, every day, the positive impact that immigrants have on our communities. They contribute in countless ways to our economic and cultural strength. Our cities and our great nation were built by immigrants and are continually reenergized by them. This misguided policy will hurt our people, our cities, and our nation. It denies our history and jeopardizes our future.

At the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors this past June, we unanimously adopted policy calling on the Administration to drop any expansion of the "public charge" rule. With this letter, we reiterate this call and urge you to abandon this misguided rule now.

Sincerely,

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Burnsville, Minnesota
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